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Research Article

**A STUDY ON THE MENTAL HEALTH AND AWARENESS  
OF THE PARENTS OF CHILDREN SUFFERING FROM  
EPILEPSY**

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**Abstract:**

**Objective:** The aim of this paper is to interrogate the awareness level about epilepsy and association of the mental health of the parents whose children are suffering from epilepsy.

**Methodology:** This study is a transverse research work which evaluated 35 parents (27 mothers and 8 fathers) of the children who were present with confirmed diagnosis of epilepsy at General Hospital, Lahore. Parents were provided by the questionnaire containing questions about knowledge of epilepsy and GHQ-28.

**Results:** Approximately, 65.70% parents were present with psychological issues. In 91.40% parents, level of awareness about the complication of epilepsy was not correct and adverse. There was a strong association between awareness level of the parents and their mental health.

**Conclusion:** In the results of this research work conclude that parents having children with epilepsy require more awareness and education about this complication to reduce their own psychological issues. So, psychosocial evaluation and greater access to the services of mental health in order to give suitable intervention may be advantageous.

**KEY WORD:** Awareness, Epilepsy, Complication, Psychological, Neurology, Fascinated Bizarrely.

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**INTRODUCTION:**

Epilepsy is very frequent disorder of neurology in childhood period [1-2]. It is much vital problem of health in the countries which are under development, where the prevalence of this complication reaches as high as 55% [3]. It is well-acknowledged from studies outside the topic of epilepsy that caring for an individual suffering from a chronic complication may be emotionally demanding [4]. But the understanding of influences of epilepsy on members of family and other informal care givers has so far fascinated bizarrely little research [5].

The capricious course and nature of epilepsy can have an important influence on physical and mental functioning of the children as well as their families. The topic of the sentimental influence of epilepsy on the members of family is always neglected because most of the research works are confined to only the patients suffering from epilepsy [6]. It is a fact that the awareness about epilepsy is important factor in coping the epilepsy in a successful manner. Deficiency and misconception in level of awareness have many implications, not only for the mental well-being but also for compliance of treatment [7].

Attitudes and beliefs of the parents about epilepsy meaningfully impact the adjustment and Quality of life for both the children and members of their family [8]. The attitude of the society, stigma and discriminate thinking against the patients of epilepsy are more dangerous than the disease [9]. The patients having optimistic behavior towards their affected children with epilepsy utilize more optimistic coping attitudes as compared to the patients with less optimistic behavior [10,11]. Research works of the past stated that anxiety of the parents may misinterpret the information about the condition of their children which can restrict the activities [12]. In this research work, we aimed to identify the level of awareness of the parents having epileptic children about epilepsy and its relationship with the psychological health of the parents.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS:**

This transverse research work included 35 parents of the children with confirmed diagnosis of epilepsy.

All these children were getting treatment between .5 to 15 years of age with an average age of 5.80 years. All these patients appeared in Pediatric Department of General Hospital, Lahore. All the children suffering from mental retardation and cerebral palsy were not the participants of this research work. The average duration since the diagnosis was 2.60 years with a range from 30 to 60 months. During the visit of the child in the Pediatric Department, the collection of the information regarding demography carried out. The administration of 2 questionnaire carried out including the questionnaire about awareness of epilepsy and GHQ-28 (General Health Questionnaire-28). The questionnaire about the epilepsy knowledge consists of 20 True /False question. The range of the scores was 0 to 21. Reliability coefficient for utilization of this tool in this research work was 0/87. The questionnaire about the awareness of epilepsy was managed to measure the vital medical as well as social aspects of the complications derived from medical field and specialists of this very field. There was covering of 8 main areas in the questionnaire; knowledge of the parents, their behavior toward epilepsy, opinion of therapy, impact of disease on their social life, occupation [13], dietary habits, driving intelligence and any other hindrances. GHQ-28 is widely in use as a screening instrument for the detection of the minor psychiatric issues among samples of community. The rating scale of this scale is from one to four. SPSS software was in use for the statistical analysis of the collected information.

**RESULTS:**

A total of 35 parents filled the questionnaires. The characteristics of demography of the parents and their children are present in Table-1. Among parents, 91.40% parents were present with poor awareness about epilepsy. The information source was physician in 74.30%, programs of television in 8.60%, close relative in 5.70% and other associated sources in 11.40% parents. The findings stated that 65.70% parents were suffering from psychological issues. Pearson correlation showed a negative association between knowledge of parents and their psychological health.

**Table-I: Demographic Characteristic of the Patients**

Characteristics	No	Percent
Gender		
Male	8	22.9
Female	27	77.1
Age range	22-46	-
Education level		
Elementary	9	25.7
Junior high school	3	8.6
High school	17	48.6
College	6	17.1
Employment		
Yes	11	31.4
No	24	68.6
Source of information		
Physician	26	74.3
Television	3	8.6
Relatives	2	5.7
Others	4	11.4

Results of this research work showed that knowledge level of the parents was significantly related with their level of education. Spearman correlation also stated negative association between mental health of the parents and their level of education. In addition, there was a strong association between the duration of the disease and mental health of the parents. There was also a positive correlation between the mental health of the parents and age of the affected child.

### DISCUSSION:

Similar to the research work conducted in past, we discovered that most of parents (91.40%) having epileptic children were present with low level of awareness about the complication of epilepsy [14,15]. In this research work, only 74.30% parents had stated that the main source of knowledge was physician. It is well-acknowledged fact that children as well as their parents require more than the clinical support to obtain a better Quality of life [16,17]. These complications of mental suffering can be reduced with the doctors-patients dialogues and lead to increase in Quality of life [18]. The results of this research work showed that most of the parents (65.70%) were present with GHQ scores greater than cut-off point which shows that parents are present with psychological issues [19,20]. Baki stated that the incidence of the symptoms about anxiety and depression was enhanced in females having epileptic children which is consistent with the findings of this research work. These findings were also consistent with the results of the research works conducted in past [21].

We discovered that there was low awareness level about epilepsy among parents, this has association with the mental health of parents. Majority of the

research works were in support of our results. There was a significant association between the knowledge of parents about epilepsy and level of their education. So, there was also a strong association between the mental health of the parents and their level of education. Very similar to the results of this research work, Mu discovered that females with low level of education were present with high scores of depressions [22]. According to this research work, there was a strong association between older child's age at the time of start of epilepsy and high epilepsy duration with the reduced psychological health of the parents, which is not similar to the findings of the research work conducted by Mu [23]. Many research works on large sample sizes have stated that frequency of the psychological issues in patient as well as in their family members in case of chronic complication is much high at the start of the disease as compared to late onset, this finding is also opposite to the results of this current research work [24].

This current research work stated that understanding of the parents about epilepsy was normally adverse and it was not correct and it was present with an association to the mental health of the patients. Increase in the level of awareness through various

programs, respite care, psychological development, and parent support group can be beneficial to tackle this complication [25]. There are some limitations of this research work as the size of sample included in this research work was very small. There was also absence of the age and sex match group of healthy controls for comparison. This was also a single center research work. There is need of multicenter research work on large sample size to consolidate the findings of this research work.

### CONCLUSION:

The results of this research work concluded that there is poor knowledge level of the parents having children suffering from epilepsy. There is a positive association of the awareness level of the parents and their mental health. There is need of health care programs to increase the knowledge of parents about this complication to reduce their mental suffering.

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